

Kentucky will come back from this bigger and better than ever before. I will make sure the Senate provides all the assistance we can to make sure that is a reality.

## INFLATION

Now, Mr. President, on a totally different matter, Washington Democrats' printing, borrowing, and spending addiction is directly hurting American families.

Two-thirds of the American people, a supermajority, are worried about inflation. About half the middle class and 70 percent of low-income families say soaring prices have personally hurt their household. And it isn't getting better, like the Biden administration promised it would. It is actually getting worse.

Last Friday, the Labor Department released a jaw-dropping report: The consumer price index has shot up 6.8 percent over the past year; 6.8 percent inflation, the worst inflation—listen to this—the worst inflation in 40 years.

Now, it is true that the average American worker has gotten a pay increase since 2020, but rising prices have more—more—than wiped that totally out.

We have a remarkable situation where American workers are earning raises, but their bigger paychecks buy their families even less than what their smaller paychecks bought before the Democrats took power. The net effect is a nearly 2-percent pay cut for the average American.

Now, our citizens do know what is happening. Sixty-seven percent of the country says Washington needs to "cut back on spending and printing money." Let me say that again. Sixty-seven percent of the country says Washington needs to "cut back on spending and printing money."

But here in Washington, leading Democrats want to plow ahead and double down on the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that got us here. They want to respond to this stunning inflation report by printing, borrowing, and spending trillions upon trillions more on new entitlements and far-left programs.

If that weren't bad enough, on Friday, a new report showed their socialist shopping spree could cost the country trillions more than Democrats are willing to admit.

You see, as one of our Democratic colleagues explained last month, his party's bill is packed full of "shell games" and "budget gimmicks"—"shell games" and "budget gimmicks." For example, their bill pretends that major new entitlements would simply expire after a few years.

Of course, that never happens. As a wise man once said, "Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program." And Democrats aren't even pretending they think the spending would stop. They are boasting about a permanent transformation. The fake expiration dates are just an accounting trick so the pricetag looks artificially low.

And last Friday, the Congressional Budget Office announced that if we acknowledge the permanent entitlements would be permanent—in other words, tell the truth—their bill would actually cost \$4.9 trillion in the first decade alone. That is the truth of the situation. It would explode the deficit by \$3 trillion in that same 10-year period.

Democrats are trying to reassure their alarmed Members that they would find new ways to offset future extensions. But let's think about it. They have just spent months shoveling every possible pay-for into this existing bill. They already burned through huge permanent tax hikes just to partially offset the bill with the gimmicks. Extending these programs further would either explode our national debt or it would take even further trillions and even further gigantic tax hikes that Democrats are simply unwilling to specify.

So which is it, historic deficits or trillions more in secret tax hikes? The right answer for the country is neither.

Later today, every Senate Democrat is going to vote along party lines to raise our Nation's debt limit by trillions of dollars. If they jam through another reckless taxing-and-spending spree, this massive debt increase will just be the beginning: more printing and borrowing to set up more reckless spending, to cause more inflation, to hurt working families even more.

What the American people need is a break.

## NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now, on one final matter, for months, while our colleagues have been writing their reckless taxing-and-spending spree behind closed doors, the Democratic majority let the National Defense Authorization Act sit in limbo. This week, 4½ months after it was cleared by the Armed Services Committee, the Senate should finally—finally—finish this legislation.

Unfortunately, those who mean America harm haven't been waiting around for us to act. Threats to our national security are grave and getting graver. Since the Biden administration's disastrous retreat from Afghanistan, according to our top commander in the region, the U.S. military has but a small fraction of the actionable intelligence they had before the coalition withdrew.

But the predictable, avoidable resurgence of terrorist networks, of course, has continued apace. We also know that more American citizens and permanent residents remain stranded under Taliban rule than the Biden administration is willing to admit.

Meanwhile, the threat of further Russian aggression toward Ukraine is testing whether this White House and our allies in Europe will avoid misguided half measures to deter and defend against grave and growing threats.

So at the risk of stating the obvious, the United States needs to follow through with promises of urgent, substantive assistance to Ukraine and en-

courage other NATO allies to do the same thing. This should not be controversial. Only in the warped world of Kremlin propaganda is giving Ukraine the means to defend itself considered provocative.

These real threats to national security and others too numerous to name should serve as a reminder of the need for America to lead by example and commit to modernizing our own military capabilities, which in turn means taking the National Defense Authorization Act seriously.

So I am glad the Senate is finally set to vote on this crucial legislation. While the process has been imperfect, I am glad that bipartisan work has produced a bill that authorizes an increase in top-line funding for our national defense.

After months of delays, our colleagues have an opportunity to begin showing that America is serious about keeping pace with adversaries like Russia that have spent literally decades modernizing their militaries with a singular focus on countering our military advantage.

We have an opportunity to pay more than just lip service to competition with China. We have an opportunity to lay a foundation that we ought to follow through with robust and full-year Defense appropriations.

I would encourage all Senators to advance this legislation today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

## TORNADOES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the monstrous chain of tornadoes and violent storms that rampaged across Illinois and five other States last Friday is a terrible reminder in America that we are all one people.

The killer storms didn't stop at State lines. They didn't discriminate based on skin color, creed, political party, or age. Among the more than 90 victims that we know of at this moment, the eldest was 86 years old; the youngest, sadly, was a tiny baby of just 5 months old.

Even as people in my State of Illinois grieve for victims in our State, we also mourn for and with all those who died and are suffering in nearby States: Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Missouri, and especially our neighbor to the south, Kentucky.

Senator MCCONNELL has spoken, and we have all seen reports, of the staggering destruction in Mayfield, KY, and other communities.

I want to say a few words about the destruction that was wreaked on my own State and also about the tremendous outpouring of compassion and community.

The National Weather Service tells us more than 30 tornadoes tore through 6 States last Friday night. The most destructive may go down as the longest continuous tornado in the history of the United States. That tornado appears to have remained on the ground for 4 hours, traveling 290 miles across

four States, pulverizing everything in its path.

From Kentucky, there were reports of objects being lifted 30,000 feet in the air by the force of the tornado. Treasured family photos were found 100 miles away. Sadly, at least 80 people have lost their lives in Kentucky.

In Illinois, we have also suffered staggering losses. Four tornadoes tore across our State between 7:30 and 10 last Friday. The greatest devastation was in Edwardsville, IL, Madison County, where a powerful tornado with winds up to 155 miles an hour peeled the roof off a massive Amazon distribution facility about 9 o'clock. I know the facility. I have been there.

Massive concrete walls 11 inches thick and 40 feet high caved in, trapping employees who were working to fill Christmas and holiday orders. Fire and rescue crews from at least 20 communities rushed to the scene. More than 45 workers managed to escape from that mountain of rubble, but 6 workers died when the warehouse collapsed. The oldest was 62; the youngest was 26. Thirty more workers were hurt. One is still hospitalized with critical injuries.

I know I speak for millions of Americans when I say that our hearts go out to all those who perished in Friday's tornadoes and to those they left behind.

I thank President Biden for responding quickly. Yesterday, our Governor, JB Pritzker, requested an emergency declaration, and of course we joined him. The President issued the emergency order just a few hours after that request. This assistance will help our State immediately, but there is more to do. Our thanks to the Red Cross and so many volunteers, local residents in communities across Illinois, for pitching in to help the victims. Supplementing that fine work are volunteers who have come to help in any way they can.

It was ironic that last week I had a coffee for a man named Jose Andres. Jose Andres is well known by many across the country for his extraordinary efforts to feed hungry people. Last Tuesday, he spoke to us, a few members of our caucus, about his non-profit organization, the World Central Kitchen. They have come to the rescue of people in need in Puerto Rico and Haiti and all across the United States and around the world.

Today, World Central Kitchen is on the ground in Mayfield, KY, where the tornadoes struck last Friday, providing hot food to the victims. It is a time when America, a divided nation, actually sees our Nation coming together.

The tornadoes didn't distinguish between red States and blue States, between Trump supporters and Biden supporters, and it is my great hope that the Senate will also put aside its politics for a few moments and stand together to help the victims.

#### BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

Mr. President, on a related matter, while we cannot say that last week's

killer tornadoes were directly related to climate change, there is no doubt among scientists that climate change is making the world's weather patterns more volatile and destructive.

How many times in the past year have Members of this Senate come to the floor to respond to a once-in-a-century heat wave or a once-in-a-century storm that has hit their home State? I will just say, for tornadoes, you can't be a kid growing up in the Midwest, as I was, and not know about tornadoes—how many times in the middle of the summer we were roused from our bed as the sirens went off, and Mom would take us down to the basement, a safe place, until the storm would blow over. That was a summer phenomena.

I just have to remind you that we just went through a December tornado in that same area—unheard of in years gone by.

Over the summer, the Pacific Northwest burned in the worst heat wave on record; there were droughts in Western States; a polar vortex knocked a Texas power grid offline. Each of these deadly and disastrous weather events are related to the next, and it is fair warning to all of us that what is happening to the climate in the United States is happening around the world.

Just yesterday, scientists warned that a glacier the size of Florida is at risk of splitting apart in the next few years, causing catastrophic rise in sea levels that could threaten the millions of people living in coastal areas.

When we talk about Build Back Better, the reconciliation bill, and that part of the bill that is focused on environmental resilience, being ready to protect ourselves and to bounce back, if necessary, when extreme weather hits, it is the topic in this morning's newspaper, and it will be in tomorrow's as well.

We ought to be coming together and finally putting aside our political differences and realize that climate change is the threat to us now and an even greater threat to our children and grandchildren.

Last week, I received a letter from one of the small business owners in our area, Dr. Dane Glueck. A few years ago, he started a company called StraightUp Solar, developing solar energy systems for homes and businesses in my State of Illinois and Missouri.

He wrote and he said: "Solar is a job-creator, and the long-term tax incentives in the Build Back Better Act for solar, storage, and domestic manufacturing will put us on a path to decarbonize the electric grid, reach the President's 2035 clean energy target, and create hundreds of thousands of quality career opportunities in every community."

Today, Dr. Glueck employs almost 100 people throughout the Midwest, but with investments in the Build Back Better Act, the reconciliation bill, he is going to expand operation and hire more workers. Let's give him the incentive that he needs.

I heard the Senator from Kentucky, the Republican leader, coming to the floor, and, once again, he is critical of this whole effort. I wish he would stop and reflect on the fact that our incentives to move in the right direction on the environment really are an important part of the conversation we should have after the devastation last Friday in his State and mine and across the Midwest.

It is time to transform our environmental crisis into an economic catalyst.

#### INSULIN

Mr. President, it turns out it is an anniversary, just this month. You see, in 1921, 100 years ago, a Canadian scientist named Frederick Banting discovered insulin. He sold the patent for this discovery to the University of Toronto for \$1. He declared that this life-saving drug didn't belong to him: "It belongs to the world."

He wasn't the only unselfish scientist I can remember. I remember, as a kid, our fear of polio, and along came Dr. Jonas Salk—bless his soul—who discovered the vaccine that we needed to protect ourselves. There was no great political debate. People weren't threatening lawsuits. My mom and dad said: Line up and roll up your sleeve, kid; we are going to do what needs to be done to protect you from polio.

Dr. Jonas Salk gave away the patent to that drug as well. It was a different era, perhaps, when insulin was discovered or the polio vaccine, but we should reflect on the state of play today of that drug, insulin.

One hundred years later, there are 8.4 million diabetics in the United States who rely on insulin. They have to pay—many of them—an exorbitant amount of money for a drug that supposedly belongs to them, according to its discoverer.

As the cost of insulin has risen, average list prices increased 40 percent for insulin between 2014 and 2018.

I am quoting from an article in today's USA Today by Katie Wedell.

Patients and their families shell out hundreds of dollars a month even if they have good insurance.

Rod Regalado is a father of a teen with type 1 diabetes. Do you know what he calls the insulin pricing system? Legal extortion.

This article tells the story of what he went through. He had never heard of a pharmacy benefit manager before 2 years ago, but it was 2 years ago that his son Matt, then 14 years old, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, and Mr. Regalado got a crash course in insulin pricing in America today.

His first trip to the pharmacy when his son was released from a hospital came with a \$1,000 price tag for all the testing supplies and insulin he'd never purchased before. The next month, when all he had to do was buy more insulin, the price was still north of \$400 after insurance.

The single dad of two said he thought he had good insurance until he found himself having to redo his entire household budget to afford the insulin to keep his son alive.